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Management issues: report on the evaluation activities of ESCAP during the biennium 2012-2013

Report on the evaluation activities of ESCAP during the biennium 2012-2013

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present report contains a summary of the main findings and recommendations of key evaluations and evaluative reviews undertaken by the secretariat during the biennium 2012-2013 and the steps taken by ESCAP to implement those recommendations.

Pursuant to resolution 67/14 on cooperation between the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and other United Nations and regional and subregional organizations serving Asia and the Pacific, the present report also provides an overview of existing arrangements in which the secretariat coordinates its work with regional and subregional organizations operating in the region and a description of the functioning, decision-making and results of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism.

The Commission may wish to use the information contained in the report to guide the direction and focus of the future work of ESCAP.

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I. Introduction

1. Through evaluation, ESCAP seeks to generate evidence-based information about the results of its work. On this basis, the secretariat undertakes efforts to foster institutional learning aimed, first of all, at improving the quality of its delivery and, secondly, at strengthening its accountability to the member States. Through resolution 66/15 on the strengthening of the evaluation function of the secretariat of the Commission, the Commission underscored the importance of reinforcing the evaluation function at ESCAP and requested the Executive Secretary to ensure that the secretariat's programmatic work, including the work of divisions, subregional offices and regional institutions, is evaluated periodically.

2. The present report contains a summary of the main findings and recommendations of key evaluations conducted in 2012 and in 2013, including the steps taken by the ESCAP secretariat to implement those recommendations. It also includes details of the secretariat's efforts to strengthen the evaluation function, including through capacity-building, quality assurance and networking. Furthermore and pursuant to resolution 67/14 on cooperation between the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and other United Nations and regional and subregional organizations serving Asia and the Pacific, the present report provides an overview of the existing arrangements in which the secretariat coordinates its work with those organizations and a description of the functioning, decision-making and results of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism.

3. During the biennium 2012-2013 and in line with the ESCAP evaluation plan, the secretariat commissioned two evaluations and seven evaluative reviews[1] (see the annex for more details). The ESCAP evaluation plan is prepared each biennium in conjunction with the ESCAP biennial programme budget. Additionally, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) initiated an external evaluation of ESCAP in 2013 following a Secretariat-wide risk assessment exercise undertaken by the Office to identify potential programme evaluation priorities. Altogether, three regional commissions, namely ESCAP, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, were on the OIOS evaluation workplan for the biennium 2013-2014. The evaluation focused on the following: research and analytical work of ESCAP; publications; and the roles and responsibilities of

[1] Evaluative processes at ESCAP are categorized into "evaluations" and "evaluative reviews", according to their management arrangements. For further details, see the ESCAP evaluation guidelines, available at www.unescap.org/partners/monitoring-and-evaluation/evaluation.

subregional offices and divisions, with particular emphasis on the research and analytical function. Stakeholders were consulted extensively as a matter of priority throughout the process. The methodology drew on quantitative performance data, a publication and an analytical product utility assessment, OIOS surveys targeted at ESCAP stakeholders and staff, and a document review. The data was collected through field missions, video teleconferences, focus groups and interviews.

II. Key recommendations from ESCAP evaluations and reviews implemented during the biennium 2012-2013 and related actions taken by the secretariat

4. At the thematic and subprogramme level, the secretariat commissioned three evaluative exercises: an evaluation of the conference structure of the Commission; an evaluation of the subprogramme on Information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction; and an evaluative review of the ESCAP Pacific Office (EPO). The evaluations were aimed at assessing the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the conference structure and subprogrammes in delivering their programmes of work, and at ascertaining the comparative advantages of ESCAP and the value it adds to the work of other relevant international and regional organizations. All of the evaluations were undertaken by independent evaluation consultants and followed the norms and standards for evaluation developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

5. The evaluation of the conference structure of the Commission was finalized in 2013. The key findings showed that 80 per cent of member States saw the Commission as fulfilling its mandate. At the same time, the member States were of the view that a greater thematic focus was required to balance the cross-cutting needs of countries and the sectoral structure of the Commission and the secretariat. The importance of remaining relevant, engaging a varied set of stakeholders and further addressing the needs of more vulnerable countries was reinforced. The evaluation also found that resolutions are recognized as the main outcome of the Commission session, and highlighted the challenges associated with resolutions, such as delayed submission and lack of clarity of the outcomes. Some of the key recommendations included: (a) reducing the duration of the Commission session from seven days to five days; (b) choosing an overarching theme for each session; (c) merging the theme study with the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific*; and (d) expanding the special body coverage to include least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and Pacific island countries every year. At its sixty-ninth session, the Commission reviewed the conference structure on the basis of the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. The Commission subsequently adopted resolution 69/1 on a conference structure of the Commission for the inclusive and sustainable development of Asia and the Pacific. In the resolution, it decided to implement many of the evaluation recommendations and also requested the Executive Secretary to conduct further study and analysis on some of the proposals. Among them were the following: (a) constituting a new committee on energy; (b) converting the Committee on Information and Communications Technology into a committee on technology; (c) reforming the governance structure of the regional institutions and their integration within the secretariat's programme of work; (d) strengthening the effectiveness of the resolutions adopted by the Commission, including indications of measurable outcomes and reporting modalities for the actions to be undertaken by member States and the secretariat; (e) convening the eight committees biennially, with

four committees meeting each year for a maximum duration of three working days and devoting a half of a day or one day to joint plenary sessions between multiple committees, if required, with the Commission having the right to mandate a specific committee or multiple committees to meet in the gap year in situations in which a particular topic becomes an urgent issue to the region; and (f) having the secretariat's subregional offices organize preparatory meetings prior to Commission sessions on the theme of those sessions at the subregional level, with a view to enlisting participation of representatives from civil society and the private sector to provide inputs into the theme study. Since the sixty-ninth session, the secretariat has conducted studies and analyses of the proposals mentioned above through various modalities, including periodic consultations with member States through the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission and an informal working group of the Advisory Committee on the implementation of resolution 69/1. Significant progress has been made with regard to proposals (a), (b), (d) and (e). The secretariat will continue to consult member States in the period between the seventieth and seventy-first Commission sessions on the proposals, with a view to preparing for the seventy-first session a comprehensive report on their programmatic, organizational and budgetary implications.

6. The evaluation of the subprogramme on Information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction was finalized in March 2012. The findings showed that the subprogramme's work was generally regarded as highly relevant to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the aims of the Hyogo Framework for Action,[2] although there had been greater emphasis on technical rather than on socioeconomic aspects, and that its most effective interventions were the well-timed reactions to disaster situations where the catalytic role of ESCAP had produced multiplier effects. The findings suggested that the mainstreaming of socioeconomic issues, such as those related to gender and disability, might merit closer attention. The subprogramme was found to make efficient use of its allocated resources. Among the recommendations from the evaluation were, as follows: (a) strengthen results-based orientation and reporting; (b) increase collaboration and coordination between substantive divisions and offices, and with external organizations, including other United Nations entities; (c) ensure greater mainstreaming of gender; and (d) focus on the comparative strengths and advantages of ESCAP. In response to the recommendations, the secretariat has undertaken a number of follow-up actions. In regard to the first recommendation, it has implemented a stronger monitoring and evaluation framework during the programme/project planning stage. In regard to the second recommendation, the secretariat (a) applied a "One UN" approach in implementing the third session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction, (b) worked closely with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and other partners, while leading the preparations for the technical session and high-level round table on public-private partnership for disaster risk reduction for the sixth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, (c) engaged in ongoing discussions on broadening the partnership in preparing the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report*, and (d) sought public-private partnerships, particularly in the field of information and communications technology (ICT), within the existing United Nations rules and regulations. In regard to the third recommendation, it has promoted making available data on disasters and their impacts on disadvantaged groups and core ICT indicators for development, disaggregated by gender. In regard to the fourth recommendation, the secretariat (a) strengthened the socioeconomic analysis for delivering analytical

[2] A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2.

products that provide evidence-based policy analysis, including the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2012* and the theme study on *Building Resilience to Natural Disasters and Major Economic Crises*, (b) promoted regional connectivity as a way to better address the digital divide and associated socioeconomic consequences and (c) analysed the socioeconomic benefits of ICT and space applications with regard to disaster risk reduction and sustainable development.

7. The evaluative review of the ESCAP Pacific Office (EPO) was undertaken to ascertain how the office can be strengthened to better serve the needs of Pacific island members and associate members. The evaluative exercise was completed in 2011, with the management response being finalized in June 2012. The review found that EPO is critical to the relevance of ESCAP in the subregion as it has established some core areas of work that play an important role in meeting the needs of Pacific island members and associate members. The recommendations included clarifying the core function of EPO, including the respective roles, responsibilities and authority of substantive divisions and EPO, and for the secretariat to document it as a management circular/instruction. As a result, one main area of follow-up centred on increasing collaboration and coordination among the substantive divisions and offices through the initiation of joint annual planning meetings by videoconference and setting and formalizing the roles and responsibilities between subregional offices and individual substantive divisions. In November 2012, as a direct result of this evaluative review, the Executive Secretary issued the framework on the working relations between ESCAP substantive divisions and subregional offices. Some further follow-up actions were the following: developing a communication and publications plan for EPO; publishing an annual report for external stakeholders; continuing to work with external partners on gender equality and the empowerment of women; mainstreaming gender equality principles into the work of EPO; and enhancing support extended to the subregion for the application of these principles.

8. An evaluative review of the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal, 1986-2010*, was conducted with the overall aim to assess the value of the journal for its intended audience as a decision-making tool for policy formulation and advocacy activities. The review focused on developing concrete recommendations to improve the contribution of the journal to meet the specific needs of its key target audiences and to identify ways to make the preparation, publication and dissemination of the journal more effective and sustainable. The review noted that the respondents highly rated the overall quality of the journal, and that its contents serve as an important source of information for the exchange of knowledge on all aspects pertaining to population, reproductive health and gender issues in the Asia-Pacific region. Several recommendations focused on the need to balance contents to make the journal as useful to practitioners as it is to academics. Among them were: reconstituting the Editorial Advisory Board of the journal; ensuring that the articles are reviewed by a sufficient number of reputed external reviewers; and giving priority to policy-oriented articles. Another key focus of the recommendations was to improve some operational and technical aspects related to the online accessibility of the journal, the online submission of articles and the maintenance of the mailing list. The secretariat has implemented most of these recommendations.

9. During the biennium 2012-2013, ESCAP led evaluative reviews of five projects funded through the United Nations Development Account (see the annex for more details). Another five project reviews were postponed due to the extension of the project duration. The United Nations Development

Account is a capacity development programme of the United Nations Secretariat, which is aimed at enhancing the capacities of developing countries in areas of priority. The projects concerned were implemented by the relevant ESCAP division or office, working in close collaboration with a range of partners, including, among others, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme and other regional commissions. These reviews made systematic assessments of the key results and outcomes of the projects and derived lessons learned in order to formulate recommendations for follow-up projects and actions to improve future project implementation. A few common observations and recommendations have emerged from these reviews, as follows:

(a) First, that the communication and dissemination of project-related products and resources need to be enhanced and supported by information and knowledge-management policies and the appropriate tools;

(b) Secondly, strong partnerships and clarity on the various roles of the partnering organizations remain essential for the success and sustainability of project interventions.

III. Strengthening evaluation at ESCAP

10. On the basis of resolution 66/15, the secretariat continues to strengthen the evaluation function at ESCAP. In 2012, a dedicated evaluation unit was established under the Programme Planning and Partnerships Division. The unit ensures that ESCAP evaluations are managed in an effective and timely manner, conducted in accordance with the ESCAP Evaluation Guidelines[3] and the standards and principles developed by UNEG and used in an effective manner for accountability and organizational learning. The unit is also responsible for improving the capacity of ESCAP staff to plan, manage and implement evaluations.

11. Building evaluation awareness and capacity among ESCAP staff is one of the overarching aims of the evaluation function at ESCAP. A workshop on evaluation in the ESCAP context was offered to ESCAP staff in September 2013. The workshop specifically focused on Development Account evaluations, given that they constitute a substantial percentage of the evaluation activities undertaken at ESCAP. This was the first of a series of evaluation workshops that will continue to be offered throughout the present biennium. These workshops are being complemented by internal evaluation briefings and support extended to subregional offices and regional institutes, as well as by an annual regional evaluation workshop conducted by the United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP), within which ESCAP is a very active participant.

12. The ESCAP evaluation unit offers quality assurance and technical support to colleagues who commission and manage evaluations at the working level. It has developed various tools to support staff in planning and carrying out evaluations. These include the following: (a) a variety of templates and other forms of guidance for assessing evaluability, setting up reference groups and reviewing terms of reference and evaluation reports; (b) a video entitled "Evaluation at ESCAP", which introduces the evaluation process for project managers; (c) a roster of evaluation consultants; (d) an online survey administration and analysis tool; (e) guidance notes on developing survey

[3] Available from www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/EvaluationGuidelinesOct09Pub.pdf.

questionnaires; (f) sample survey questionnaires from across ESCAP; and (g) a reference note on indicators and measurements at ESCAP.

13. Work on enhancing the use of evaluation results is ongoing. The ESCAP Evaluation Tracker, an information technology tool for improving the use of information generated from ESCAP evaluations, is being upgraded to make it more user-friendly, and improve the options available and add new ones. The improved tool will help the secretariat be more efficient and effective in tracking and using evaluations, and will ultimately contribute to further strengthening external and internal accountability for achieving development results. In addition, the first few of a series of evaluation briefs, which contain summaries of the findings and follow-up actions of previous evaluations, have been made available to staff.

14. The ESCAP evaluation function benefits from a broad network of evaluation professionals globally, and in the region. The evaluation unit co-chaired UNEDAP in 2013, and is a member of UNEG, as well as part of the Development Account Evaluation Task Force. ESCAP initiated the development of a monitoring and evaluation network, which links the focal points for evaluation of the five regional commissions. The aim of this network is to share resources and experiences in monitoring and evaluation and to incorporate monitoring and evaluation norms and standards developed by the Department of Management, UNEG and OIOS. ESCAP currently serves as the secretariat of the network.

15. ESCAP is scheduled to host the annual meeting of UNEG, which is scheduled to be held in Bangkok from 31 March to 4 April 2014. This would be the first time that this meeting and associated evaluation workshops would have been held in the Asia-Pacific region. ESCAP is grateful for this rare opportunity to enhance its visibility before the global United Nations family and to promote the evaluation culture before ESCAP staff. The overall theme of the meeting is "Strengthening the quality and use of evaluations at the national and regional levels and ensuring accountability to the people we serve". The first two days of the meeting are scheduled to be dedicated to an evaluation practice exchange, which is to feature a high-level panel discussion on the importance of evaluation to guide decision-making and ensure accountability among senior officials from governments and their development partners, including the United Nations, in the context of the development agenda beyond 2015. The Annual General Meeting of UNEG is scheduled to be held during the three remaining days of the meeting.

16. Along with the secretariat's ongoing pursuit of good practice in mainstreaming gender into the programme management cycle, the UNEG guidance documents covering the integration of gender equality into evaluation are being promoted among staff members for use in carrying out evaluative activities.

IV. Coordination mechanisms with regional and subregional organizations

17. Pursuant to Commission resolution 67/14, the following summary provides an overview of the manner in which the secretariat carries out its mandate and coordinates its work with regional and subregional organizations operating in Asia and the Pacific, and describes the functioning, decision-making and results of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, including how the secretariat leverages synergies and other efficiencies that could serve as a model for coordination.

A. Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism

18. The Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism continued to provide the primary vehicle for strengthening policy coherence within the United Nations system and promoting cooperation and collaboration among United Nations entities and their development partners in addressing regional development issues.

19. The Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, convened and serviced by the ESCAP secretariat, has a membership of 31 United Nations and affiliated entities, including, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank. Currently, seven thematic working groups operate as subsidiary bodies of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, namely Education for all; Environment and disaster risk management; Gender equality and empowerment of women; Health; International migration, including human trafficking; Poverty and hunger; and Youth (a joint group of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and UNDG Asia-Pacific)

20. As the report on the key achievements of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism in 2012 was provided in the document E/ESCAP/69/17, the present report focuses mainly on the achievements in 2013.

21. The Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism organized seven meetings in 2013, including a working session chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General at the side of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission and a meeting on the ASEAN-United Nations Comprehensive Partnership. Much of the work of the Regional Coordination Mechanism was focused on articulating the regional perspectives of the United Nations system as a follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development process and inputs into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015 processes, as well as on the priorities and unfinished business under the Millennium Development Goals, with a strong focus on poverty.

22. Some of the key highlights of the work of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, including through its thematic working groups, in 2013 include: (a) publication of the *Asia-Pacific Aspirations: Perspectives for a Post-2015 Development Agenda: Asia-Pacific Regional MDGs Report 2012/13*;[4] (b) preparation of the road map for Millennium Development Goal 1 on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, which promoted the Zero Hunger Challenge initiative in Asia and the Pacific, and six briefs on success stories in fighting poverty and hunger in Asia and the Pacific; (c) issuance of a joint agency report entitled "Towards a green economy for sustainable development and poverty reduction: An Asia-Pacific perspective";[5] (d) implementation of a "One UN" approach in the holding of the third session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction in which the Thematic Working Group on Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction actively participated in the preparation and the conduct of the meeting; (e) the convening of the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in Bangkok from 29 to 31 May; (f) the planning of United Nations youth activities in the region to contribute to

[4] ESCAP, ADB and UNDP, *Asia-Pacific Aspirations: Perspectives for a Post-2015 Development Agenda: Asia-Pacific Regional MDGs Report 2012/13* (September 2013).

[5] *Towards a green economy for sustainable development and poverty reduction: An Asia-Pacific perspective*. (United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism). Available from http://issuu.com/mayanitamojado/docs/asia-pacific_perspective.

the more effective delivery of youth-related programmes and projects; (g) development of an interagency strategy for the improvement of gender statistics in Asia and the Pacific; and (h) the convening of the thirteenth Regional Meeting of National Education for All Coordinators: The Big Push.

23. UNDG Asia-Pacific complements the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism as it serves as another vehicle for ESCAP to coordinate and interact with other entities in the United Nations system. It focuses on the "Delivering as one" process at the country level. The secretariat actively engages in the work of the UNDG Asia-Pacific, including through selective involvement in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) processes.

24. Progress was made in strengthening collaboration between the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism and UNDG Asia-Pacific through a joint initiative to support collaboration in formulating Asia-Pacific perspectives in two main areas: the means of implementation of the development agenda beyond 2015; and a global partnership to support it. The initiative largely builds on the Bangkok Declaration of the Asia-Pacific region on the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015[6] and the *Asia-Pacific Aspirations: Perspectives for a Post-2015 Development Agenda: Asia-Pacific Regional MDGs Report 2012/13*.[4] As part of this initiative, a joint Regional Coordination Mechanism-UNDG Asia-Pacific expert panel discussion entitled "Implementing the global development agenda: Asia-Pacific perspectives on partnerships and means" was a side event at the sixth session of the General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, which was held in New York from 9 to 13 December 2013.

B. Formal arrangements with United Nations and international agency counterparts

25. Coordination and collaboration among ESCAP and the United Nations and other international agency counterparts is underpinned through a series of memorandums of understanding (MoUs). Signed by ESCAP at the level of the Executive Secretary, these MoUs typically set out priority areas for cooperation and arrangements for working together. In 2013, ESCAP signed an MoU between the regional commissions and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Under this agreement, FAO has provided significant support to the work of ESCAP on agricultural statistics.

26. During the period 2012-2013, annual formal consultations were held with ADB and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The agendas for these consultations included, among other things, a review of progress in the implementation of previous joint commitments, a review of lessons learned and experiences and the identification of key priorities for the next 12 months. The chairing and convening of these meetings alternated between ESCAP and the respective agencies, and decision-making was by consensus.

27. Annual formal consultations were held in July 2012 and June 2013 with ADB and in November with ILO. Another consultation with ILO is scheduled to be held in the second quarter of 2014. The main areas of consultation with ADB are helping countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals, water, environment, climate change, statistics, social protection and regional

[6] Bangkok Declaration of the Asia-Pacific region on the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015 (27 August 2013). Available from apmd2013.unescap.org/documents/APMD2013_Declaration.pdf.

connectivity, while with ILO, they are social protection, statistics, macroeconomic and labour market policies, green economy and green jobs, and youth employment and entrepreneurship.

28. The secretariat continued to work with the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in supporting the United Nations Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). Its engagement in this effort was mainly centred on organizing the annual meetings of the SPECA Governing Council, which were held in Bangkok on 28 November 2012 and in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 22 November 2013, the SPECA Economic Forums, which were held in Bangkok on 27 and 28 November 2012 and in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from 19 to 21 November 2013. The secretariat contributed to the work of the project working groups that covered areas in which ESCAP has strong expertise and in general a comparative advantage, namely trade, transport, and water and energy resources.

C. Relations with regional and subregional bodies

29. ESCAP continued to work closely with regional and subregional organizations that serve the region in pursuit of its mandate to build regional consensus on shared priorities and common solutions for common problems, and to provide a regional hub for sharing development knowledge and good practice across Asia and the Pacific. In this context, ESCAP works with a range of regional and subregional partners, including under formal cooperation agreements.

30. During the biennium 2012-2013, under existing agreements, ESCAP continued to work with ADB, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). During the same period, ESCAP signed new or renewed cooperation agreements with the Eurasian Economic Commission, the Eurasian Development Bank, the Greater Tumen Initiative and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In addition, ESCAP signed a trilateral agreement in 2013 with ECE and the Secretariat of the Integration Committee of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC).

31. In close collaboration with other United Nations regional organizations under the auspices of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, the secretariat coordinated a review of the ASEAN-United Nations Comprehensive Partnership, in particular through the inputs to the economic and social cultural pillars. In this context, the Executive Secretary participated in the ASEAN-United Nations Summit, which was held in Bandar Seri Begawan on 11 October 2013. The Summit agreed to proceed with developing a strategic road map for implementing the partnership during the period 2014-2015. The secretariat's partnership with ASEAN is in the areas of regional connectivity (including transport, trade facilitation and information and communications technology), disaster risk reduction and social development.

V. Conclusion

32. As outlined in the present report, evaluation and evaluative reviews undertaken during the biennium 2012-2013 continued to provide evidence-based information on the performance and relevance of ESCAP operations at the subprogramme and project levels. The information facilitated performance enhancement and guided organization-wide changes at ESCAP, particularly regarding its conference structure. Key follow-up actions to evaluation recommendations are being implemented with a view to strengthening results-

based orientation and reporting, increasing collaboration and cooperation internally among substantive units of ESCAP and externally with other regional and subregional organizations, clarifying the function of the secretariat's subregional offices vis-à-vis substantive divisions and mainstreaming socioeconomic issues, such as gender and disability, into its work programme. As part of the evaluation process, the Executive Secretary signs a document containing an evaluation management response and follow-up actions for each evaluation conducted by ESCAP. The secretariat has also put in place an internal system for tracking the progress of those actions. Both of these practices reinforce the accountability of the ESCAP management in implementing follow-up actions.

33. Additionally, the secretariat will continue to document and assess the manner in which it carries out its mandate and coordinates its work with regional and subregional organizations operating in Asia and the Pacific, and with other United Nations and international organization counterparts in the context of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism. In the case of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, information on its activities and joint work carried out by ESCAP members and associate members will be maintained on its website, which is part of the ESCAP website.

34. The experience described above indicates the value of formalized frameworks for coordination and collaboration, including MoUs with key partners, that can enhance transparency and accountability through processes of regular joint review and planning based on agreed commitments and processes for working together. Also highlighted is the importance of ensuring that work with stakeholders is well coordinated and operations complement each other in aspects pertaining to work planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is considered that the secretariat has made important progress in these directions in recent years, as described above.

Annex

Evaluations and evaluative reviews implemented by ESCAP during the biennium 2012-2013

Title	Category of evaluation[a]	Type of evaluation	Year completed
Evaluation of the Conference Structure of the Commission of ESCAP	Evaluation	Strategic	2013
Evaluation of the ESCAP Subprogramme on Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction[b]	Evaluation	Subprogramme	2012
Evaluative Review of the ESCAP Pacific Office[b]	Evaluative review	Subprogramme	2011[c]
Evaluation of the Asia-Pacific Population Journal, 1986-2010[b]	Evaluative review	Project	2013
Development Account Project: Strengthening Capacity in Mitigating the Impact of the Financial Crisis and Sustaining Dynamic and Inclusive Development in Asia and the Pacific	Evaluative review	Project	Review ongoing
Development Account Project: Strengthening Social Protection	Evaluative review	Project	Review ongoing
Development Account Project: Capacity-building of Pacific Small Island Developing States to Incorporate the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation into National Sustainable Development Strategies	Evaluative review	Project	2012
Development Account Project: Enhancing Trade Competitiveness of Least Developed Countries, Countries in Transition and Transit Countries through the Implementation of Single Window Facilities	Evaluative review	Project	2012
Development Account Project: Supporting Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)–based Development Strategies through Integrated Regional Action	Evaluative review	Project	2012

[a] Evaluative processes at ESCAP are categorized into "evaluations" and "evaluative reviews", according to their management arrangements. See the ESCAP *Evaluation Guidelines*, available at www.unescap.org/partners/monitoring-and-evaluation/evaluation, for further details.

[b] Results of this evaluations had been reported to the Commission at its sixty-eighth session in May 2012.

[c] Management response and follow-up action plan completed in 2012.